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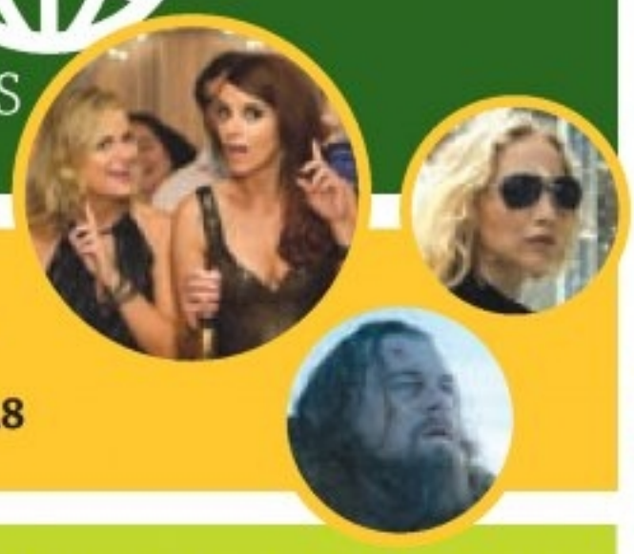

MORE THAN JUST 'STAR WARS'

Our Winter Movie Preview looks at all the holiday riches. 18

Philly insiders tell us what's hot this month. 26

Owls a win from first title in decades. 30-31

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WAS IT TERRORISM?

The day after the mass murder in San Bernardino, officials labored to uncover the couple's motives and to determine whether they had links to Islamist militants. 10

GETTY IMAGES

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5TH GRADERS' BOMB PLOT

1 Five fifth-grade students in New Jersey were detained by police for allegedly plotting to set off an explosive device during a field trip to a local high school, according to local media. The students, all 10 or 11 years old, attend School 11 in Clifton, New Jersey. The students have not been charged, police said. They were released to their parents and suspended. REUTERS

FIFA SCANDAL DEEPENS

2 Swiss police arrested the two top soccer bosses in the Americas on Thursday on suspicion of taking millions of dollars in bribes linked to television rights, widening a graft probe into world soccer's governing body. Switzerland's Federal Office of Justice named the men as Alfredo Hawit of Honduras, acting president of the CONCACAF region and a FIFA vice president, and Juan Angel Napout of Paraguay, head of the South American soccer federation CONMEBOL. REUTERS

CUBAN SLAMS SEC

3 Billionaire investor Mark Cuban is lashing out against the Securities and Exchange Commission over its push against legislation that would require government agencies to get warrants before accessing emails of people under investigation.
REUTERS

NEW YOUTH SPORTS FACILITY

7 Members of the Philadelphia Youth Basketball program at an event announcing plans to build a 120,000-square-foot facility for youth sports and well-being in the Logan section of North Philadelphia on Thursday.

MAIN PHOTOS BY CHARLES MOSTOLLER, ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

$8M TAB FOR POPE VISIT

4 Pope Francis' visit to Philadelphia in September looks to have cost taxpayers a grand total of $8 million, reports said. Out of a total of $17 million the city is paying for the weekend of the papal visit, the World Meeting of Families will cover $9 million, the Inquirer reported.
SAM NEWHOUSE

WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES

5 The U.S. military will let women serve in all combat roles, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced in a move striking down gender barriers in the armed forces. "As long as they qualify and meet the standards, women will now be able to contribute to our mission in ways they could not before," Carter said. "They'll be allowed to drive tanks, fire mortars and lead infantry soldiers into combat. They'll be able to serve as Army Rangers and Green Berets, Navy SEALS, Marine Corps infantry, Air Force parajumpers," he said. REUTERS

CHEF TALKS PARALYSIS

6 Philly chef Eli Kulp opened up in a People magazine interview about life after he suffered a spinal cord injury during the Amtrak derailment in May. Kulp discussed coping with the fact that he will never cook again, but continues to play a role in the development of restaurant in NYC, as well as behind the scenes in Philly. METRO

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Help Metro make magic

Please donate to the Metro Magic annual holiday toy drive during the 2015 holiday season.
In keeping with the holiday spirit of giving, Metro is once again launching Tony's Metro Magic, our annual toy drive for underprivileged children in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

This year marks the seventh anniversary of the toy drive, which was renamed in memory of the man who oversaw the project for more than four years, Tony Metcalf, Metro's longest-running editor-in-chief. Metcalf passed away in 2013 from colon cancer at the age of 50.

Metcalf lit up every year as he saw the faces of children unwrap their holiday gifts. It is our goal to keep that magic alive. We are now asking readers to contribute what they can to Tony's Metro Magic.

Metro has created a wish list at the Target website that readers can access by going to www.metro.us and clicking on the Tony's Metro Magic logo.

From there, just choose the toys you wish to donate, pay online using Target's secure payment system. Your gifts, along with your name attached, will be delivered to Metro's offices in each city.

This season we hope you will remember the children who will spend the holidays in shelters or who may not have gifts to open. Even one small gift can make a big difference in a child's holiday season.

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Hoverboards flying high with Eagles

The Eagles are struggling on the field, but are traveling around the locker room in luxury on hoverboards.

EVAN MACY
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It's not uncommon to trek through the corridors of the Eagles' practice facility, the NovaCare Complex, and have to dodge out of the way of Lane Johnson or Malcolm Jenkins speeding by on a hoverboard.

With players working hard on the field, many players travel in the locker room with luxury on the team's favorite mode of transportation.

"Malcolm started it," Chip Kelly said. "I think he teaches a class on it."

You'd think that a team with as many injury issues (the Eagles are hoping Sam Bradford and Zach Ertz can play Sunday against the Patriots while concussed Ryan Mathews has yet to practice in three weeks) would want to avoid the risk that comes from the futuristic, segway-like device. But Kelly is not worried.

"We haven't had any injuries and it hasn't been a big [issue] — but there are a lot of [the hoverboards]. It's a little bit like 'Back to the Future' with guys flying around the hallways here. If we had an injury, we would address it, but they have been doing it I think since back in preseason camp, maybe even back to [OTAs] and we have not had any [knocking on wood] hover board injuries.

"I don't even know how you would put that on the injury report. Would you have to list that as hover board, Grade 1 or Grade 2? We haven't had anything yet."

However, issues are arising across the globe with the boards — which don't actually hover.

In the U.K., more than 15,000 of them were seized and deemed to be unsafe "due to a range of concerns, such as safety issues with the plug, cabling, charger, battery or the cut-off switch within the board, which often fails." Many of the devices are actually feared to be an explosion risk.

Here's hoping the Eagles continue to have better luck "hovering" than they've had tossing the football around.

Psyched for 'Star Wars'

Performers and "Star Wars" fans, Erick "Master Tribble," left, and burlesque dancer Liberty Rose duel with lightsabers in the Free Library parkway branch Thursday. They were there promoting "The Farce Awakens," a burlesque Star Wars-inspired performance at Philamoca scheduled for Dec. 11, and Blacktribbles' 2015 Holiday Tribble, which is scheduled for Dec. 16. SAM NEWHOUSE

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More magic murals on South St.

The artsy mosaics of Isaiah Zagar continue to expand on South Street.

SAM NEWHOUSE
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sam.newhouse@metro.us

One of South Street's most iconic artists was back in the neighborhood Thursday for the unveiling of his newest mural.

The mosaic-mural in Zagar's well-known style occupies the small road of Schell Street, off South Street between Eighth and Ninth streets.

He's added sections of the piece over the years, but formally cut the ribbon on the piece on Thursday afternoon.

"The theme is people. I love people, South Street loves people," said Zagar, who is known for creating the nearby Magic Gardens at 10th and South streets — which draws an estimated 60,000 to 90,000 visitors annually.

South Philly artist Isaiah Zagar in front of his newest mosaic-mural on South and Schell streets. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

"The theme is people. I love people, South Street loves people."
Zagar

"The magic has never left South Street," Zagar said. "It's perpetuated by all the young people that keep coming here and finding themselves here."

Zagar has been practicing his unique blend of Peruvian inspirations in mosaics and murals that use pieces of mirrors prominently since 1968. His most-known creation is the Magic Gardens — a three-dimensional sculpture garden that invites visitors to walk down pathways lined with his colorful, hypnotic designs.

Emily Smith, executive director of the Magic Gardens, said Zagar's murals have contributed significantly to beautifying the neighborhood around South Street.

"Isaiah's fingerprints are everywhere, all over the city," Smith said. "This wall used to be hit with graffiti all the time. That won't happen anymore."

Michael Harris, executive director of the South Street Headhouse District, credited Zagar's work with consistently drawing people to the neighborhood.

"People are always going up and down this street and taking pictures," Harris said. "There's over 200 of his pieces around here. They're all public art. It's pretty staggering."

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'CHI-RAQ' AN AFFRONT TO #BLACKLIVESMATTER

ERNEST OWENS

The Ernest Opinion

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Award-winning multimedia journalist Ernest Owens is a keen observer of social, LGBT and race issues in Philadelphia. Follow him @MrErnestOwens

This week, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel fired Superintendent Garry McCarthy after failing to enact systemic departmental change that would have prevented one of the city's worst police shootings in recent memory.

The viral video of a white Chicago cop firing 16 rounds into the black body of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald has once again reminded America how complex the intermingling of race and the criminal justice system is.

Such killings reiterate the necessity of #BlackLivesMatter — the movement aiming to combat the institutional racial bias and injustice targeted at vulnerable black citizens.

But tragically, our nation's most prolific black filmmaker plans to capitalize off of the antithesis of such a cause.

Spike Lee's new film "Chi-Raq," in theatres Friday, predicates itself on being a "satire" exposing the "self-inflicted genocide" of black-on-black gun violence in Chicago.

Chicago is my birthplace and an emotional bloodline to my understanding of urban life. It's no secret that the climbing death toll due to gang-related gun violence is an unprecedented crisis that casts an ugly shadow over our nation's third-largest city. Hence the city has been grossly called "Chi-Raq," given that lives lost supersede the number of Americans killed during the Iraq War.

But we aren't the only ones who've had our ups and downs. Remember when Philadelphia was "Killadelphia," Baltimore was "Murder Ink," or when Brooklyn used to be a bloody ghost town? All of these cities have had their fair share of national outcry when it came to excessive urban massacres.

But Mr. Lee believes that "no peace, no piece" will fix this problem. His "satire" is a patriarchal heteronormative attempt at modernizing the Greek comedy "Lysistrata" that suggests that women stopping sexual intercourse with their violent male partners will end the war.

Spike Lee GETTY IMAGES

Sure, Spike…because the war began with black men killing one another for no clear reason and when they choose to stop — so will the war. It doesn't get any more tone-deaf than such vapid logic.

This cinematic victim-blaming is an affront to the current movement of #BlackLivesMatter and any mature understanding of the urban sociology. It places the responsibility of gun-violence prevention on the most vulnerable communities who have fallen helpless to a system that has failed to protect them.

If you want to prevent senseless killings in America, stop looking solely at the killer — include a look at the environment that produces it. Whether you are in Boston, New York City, Chicago, or Philadelphia — they all have grotesque familiarities.

Such as an embarrassing poverty rate with a crippling education system that leaves people at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to employment… I'm looking at you Philadelphia. A heavily gentrifying population that pushes lower-income communities out of their neighborhoods with less access to proper resources — sounds familiar, NYC? Or how about a city whose use of racial profiling is second nature and has become accustomed to being an unwelcoming place for diversity — Boston, do better.

Among others, these factors — tied in with lax gun control policies — have created environments like "Chi-Raq." Mr. Lee is putting the cart before the horse with his out-of-touch religious pathology of healing such communities.

His pathetic "Orange March" with the Rev. Al Sharpton after the NYC premiere of his film on Wednesday to raise gun violence awareness was nothing more than a marketing push that had hundreds of marchers wearing his memorabilia misguided.

It's going to take a lot more than just poor black men putting down their guns to combat this issue — perhaps Mr. Lee should have done the right thing by letting the world know that.

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$500 Down

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US authorities look for militant links to shooters in California mass slaying

The couple had entered the U.S. in July 2014 after a trip that included Pakistan and perhaps other countries.

The couple suspected of killing 14 people at a holiday party in California amassed thousands of rounds of ammunition and a dozen pipe bombs, authorities said on Thursday as they sought clues to the pair's motives and whether they had links to Islamist militants.

Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and Tashfeen Malik, 27, his wife and mother of his 6-month-old daughter, were killed in a shootout with police five hours after Wednesday's massacre at the Inland Regional Center social services agency in the city of San Bernardino.

Twenty-one people were wounded in the shooting, which ranks as the deadliest instance of U.S. gun violence in three years.

San Bernardino Police Chief Jarrod Burguan said at a Thursday news conference that the search of a townhouse leased by Farook and Malik in the nearby community of Redlands turned up flash drives, computers and cellphones.

Officials in Washington familiar with the investigation said so far there was no hard evidence of a direct connection between the shooters and any militant group abroad, but the electronics would be checked to see if the couple had been browsing on jihadist websites or social media.

FBI and local law enforcement move a weapon and compile evidence at the scene. GETTY IMAGES

One U.S. government source told Reuters that the FBI was examining information indicating that Farook had been in contact with individuals who were themselves under FBI investigation at some point, some from cases already closed. The source also said it was possible that one or more of the Farook contacts under scrutiny were located overseas.

But no information has yet emerged suggesting any ties or contacts between Farook and the Islamic State or other specific militant groups, the source said.

Officials from President Barack Obama to Burguan said the attack may have been motivated by extremist ideology but that questions of motive remained unanswered.

Farook, a U.S. citizen, was born in Illinois, the son of Pakistani immigrants, according to Hussam Ayloush, who heads the Los Angeles area chapter of the Muslim advocacy group Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Malik was born in Pakistan and lived in Saudi Arabia until they married, Ayloush said.

David Bowdich, FBI assistant director in Los Angeles, said Malik was admitted to the United States` on a K-1 "fiancee visa" and was traveling on a Pakistani passport.

The director of the Islamic Center of Riverside, a mosque Farook attended regularly for two years until 2014, described him as a devout Muslim who made the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia a few years ago and celebrated his wedding reception at the mosque. REUTERS

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Man's hoard of nearly 5,000 guns shows ease of amassing arms in US

As sheriff's investigators threaded past the battered cars, cast-off tires and rusted farm equipment cluttering Brent Nicholson's front yard in Pageland, South Carolina, there was no hint of the sinister stockpile hidden behind his windowless front door.

Inside, the guns were everywhere: rifles and shotguns piled in the living room, halls and bedrooms. Outside, when they rolled up the door on the pre-fab metal garage, more arms spilled out at their feet.

"This has completely changed our definition of an ass-load of guns," said Chesterfield County Sheriff Jay Brooks. Six weeks after the discovery, officers are still cataloging the weapons, many of which have proved stolen, and the final tally is expected to be close to 5,000.

The question of how one man amassed such a stockpile of guns arises just as there is renewed American soul-searching over the widespread availability of firearms in the wake of a series of mass shootings.

Even in a country where more people own more guns than anywhere else in the world, Nicholson's cache is extraordinary. The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives doesn't rank gun seizures by size, but a spokesman says Nicholson's hoard probably is among the largest ever.

Yet when and why Nicholson set out to amass such an arsenal remains a mystery. Investigators are trying to determine whether he was simply a gun-obsessed hoarder or a supply valve in the "Iron Pipeline" of illegal firearms flowing from the south to New Jersey, New York and other northern states.

Stack of guns belonging to Brent Nicholson CHESTERFIELD COUNTY SHERIFF

REUTERS

MIRACLE ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

TOM FOREMAN

Opinion

CNN's Tom Foreman is the author of the new book "My Year of Running Dangerously."

Late night at the mall. Shops are closed. Security lights gleam. A man slumps to a big red chair amid glittering, cotton "snow." Santa looks at his watch. "You're late, Jeb."

"I know, Santa. But thanks for waiting. You were always there for me as a child, and I could use some help now."

Santa's face softens, and he pats his knee. "Climb up here. Tell me: What's wrong?"

"Well Santa, I'm running for president of the United States …"

"You are? I mean — you are!"

"See? That's the problem. Everyone thought I'd be the Republican front-runner, but I've been elbowed aside by Trump, Carson, Cruz, and golly — almost everyone!"

"Hmm," Santa says, "And what do you want me to do about it?"

Jeb's eyes glisten. "I was thinking maybe you could magically roll the calendar back to Christmas last year. I could have a fresh start, and maybe I'd jump into the lead, and the party would like me, and …"

"Hold on!" Santa laughs. "I'm Kris Kringle, not a miracle worker. But you still have a chance. You can rally your folks, plant those yard signs, meet those Iowans, and with Hillary's political baggage — it could turn out great!"

Jeb smiles faintly. "Gosh, some people have been saying I should drop out."

"What do they know? Now, here's a candy cane. Get back on that campaign trail and give it all you've got, fella!"

They hug and Jeb walks away whistling Jingle Bells, his step jauntier. An elf sidles out of the shadows. "Do you really think he can turn it around, Santa?"

"I do. But I'm pretty sure Nate Silver doesn't."

"Ha! Good one. Let's get out of here. I've got "The Good Wife" on the DVR."

"No, I need to wait. I'm seeing pretty much every candidate except the frontrunners. Can you grab me some hot chocolate? Martin O'Malley should be here any minute, and that could be a long talk."

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Coldplay to play 2016 Super Bowl halftime show: media reports

Chris Martin of Coldplay performs on stage during the 2015 American Music Awards at Microsoft Theater on Nov. 22 in Los Angeles. GETTY IMAGES

British rock band Coldplay will play the halftime show at the 2016 Super Bowl, according to media reports Thursday.

The band, led by frontman Chris Martin, will take the stage at halftime in the game on Feb. 7 in Santa Clara, California, the Wall Street Journal, Us Weekly and Sports Illustrated reported, citing sources.

The NFL did not immediately respond to requests for confirmation.

The annual NFL Super Bowl is the most-watched event on U.S. television, drawing more than 100 million viewers. Last year's performer was Katy Perry. REUTERS

BRIEF

Lyft partners with Ola, GrabTaxi to reach Asian markets

Lyft has formed new partnerships with two Asian on-demand ride services, Ola and GrabTaxi, as the U.S. company works to gain a toehold in the booming overseas market.

Lyft, which announced an alliance with Didi Kuaidi, China's largest ride-hailing company, back in September, has formed a coalition that will allow passengers to use all platforms to hail a ride as they travel between the U.S. and Asia.

The four companies, which connect passengers with cars and other transportation services through mobile apps, will compete together against Uber. They will also share information on new technology and products, and knowledge of local markets and regulations.

The new partnerships, announced on Thursday by Lyft Co-founder and President John Zimmer, are expected to be completed by mid-2016. Didi Kuaidi's deal provided Lyft with a $100 million investment, but Ola and GrabTaxi have not offered any financing, a Lyft spokeswoman said.

Joining forces allows these ride services to bolster, albeit just slightly, their competitive edge to Uber, a global force that is in 67 countries.

REUTERS

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Selfies under

People in London smile the least in their selfies while Moscow's selfie takers are predominantly women dressed to the nines, says a researcher involved in setting up a London show about selfies.

For its new exhibition "Big Bang Data", Somerset House has commissioned "Selfiecity London," a spotlight on 640 selfies selected out of a total of 152,462 public Instagram images taken in a single week in September in a 2-square-mile radius around the museum. The show opens to the public on Thursday.

The Selfiecity project is led globally by Lev Manovich, a professor of computer science at City University of New York's Graduate Center. Selfiecity's eight-person lab compiles and analyses selfies from around the world, the five other cities so far being Bangkok, Berlin, Moscow, New York and Sao Paulo.

Manovich said the project was designed "to see if we can learn new things about cultural differences and cultural behavior" from selfies,

82%

MOSCOW HAD BY FAR THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF FEMALE SELFIE TAKERS — 82 PERCENT OF THEM

and to make such analysis more democratic for people who lack deep knowledge of computing.

In that respect, he said the most important part of the "Selfiecity London" display was its interactivity function. On a touch screen, visitors can introduce filters and criteria — 'people from London over 35,' or 'very small children' — and observe patterns and trends within that chosen subgroup.

Globally, the findings showed that "every city is unique" in its own peculiar way, Manovich said.

People taking selfies in London smiled the least and closed their eyes the most, he said. By contrast, the highest percentages of "strong smiles" were to be

BRIEF

Artist hauls Greenland ice to Paris as a reminder of climate change

Residents of central Paris got a chilling reminder on Thursday of the challenge facing negotiators at the world climate summit on the city's outskirts: 80 tons of Greenland ice left to slowly melt on the cobbles in front of the Pantheon.

The ice was scooped from a Greenland fjord and hauled to Paris as part of an installation by the visual artist Olafur Eliasson, best known for building waterfalls in New York City in 2008 and an artificial sky inside the Tate Modern gallery in London in 2003.

"I hope [this] work of art can actually bridge the gap between the data, the scientists, the politicians and heads of state and how normal people feel," Eliasson said on Thursday of the installation, dubbed Ice Watch.

He said he hoped the installation would inspire an ambitious global deal to curb climate change as negotiators from 195 countries met for a

The ice in Paris TWITTER

fourth day of the Paris climate summit in one of the city's northern suburbs.

The ice was pulled from Greenland's Nuuk Fjord and transported in refrigerated containers by sea to Denmark. It was then trucked to Paris, where workers in hard hats fork-lifted them into place Wednesday night. The blocks, some as high as six feet, drew an audience by Thursday morning as they melted in front of the 225-year-old Pantheon.

"It really shows the connection between human beings and nature, because this ice's existence is only temporary, like our existence," said Kevin Avril, who works nearby and came down for a closer look at the installation. REUTERS

world scrutiny

The selfie findings show that every city is unique in its own way. TWITTER

found in Bangkok and Sao Paulo, whereas the ratios in Moscow and New York were "significantly" lower.

Russian women treat selfies "like a fashion magazine: they're always totally made up, and looking straight at the camera", Manovich said.

London selfie takers included more older men than elsewhere: the average male was 28 years old, versus 26.3 for other cities. The youngest selfie takers of all were to be found in Bangkok, where the average age for females was 20.3 and males 22.7.

The CUNY academic said his team had wanted to include Japan in the study, but couldn't because "when people pose for selfies, they're more elusive: they often don't show their full face, so the software couldn't deal with it". REUTERS

BRIEF

US, China reach agreement on guidelines for requesting assistance fighting cyber crime

The United States and China have reached an agreement on guidelines for requesting assistance on cyber crime or other malicious cyber activities, the U.S. Justice Department said.

The agreement was reached in talks in Washington this week among officials including U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and Chinese Public Security Minister Guo Shengkun.

The Justice Department said in addition to the agreement, China and the U.S. will conduct "tabletop exercises" in the spring with a number of scenarios designed to improve understanding of the expectations for response and cooperation.

The talks had long been planned to follow a landmark agreement between the two countries reached in September. The next round will come in June, the Justice Department said.

China's Ministry of Public security said the agreement would have a "major impact" on the implementation of Internet security measures, adding that the two sides resolved to maintain frank discussion on the issue.

The statement made no mention of a report from China's Xinhua news agency this week on the hacking of sensitive personnel records on people holding U.S. security clearances at the Office of Personnel Management last year. Xinhua said the hacking was criminal, not state-sponsored.

The Washington Post reported Wednesday that multiple people had been arrested in that case, which compromised data on more than 22 million federal workers, though people close to U.S. officials told Reuters they believed it was a legitimate intelligence target and a government-sponsored intrusion.

U.S. officials have said they are unaware of any evidence demonstrating that the hacked OPM data had been used for any nefarious purposes. REUTERS

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Chewie and Han are all set for the Life Day celebrations this year. LUCASFILM

Ring in the holidays with Chewbacca

There aren't many big feel-good holiday-themed movies this season. Instead there are serious Oscar contenders, some of them bleak. On the other hand, maybe you'll see Chewbacca. Depending on which grim mood you're in, here's how this year's winter awards season looks at the movies. MATT PRIGGE

FILMS ABOUT NOSTALGIA

The Dark Side awakens in "The Force Awakens." LUCASFILM

A recent piece in Wired suggested it's entirely possible the "Star Wars" series will outlive us all, spawning entries and spinoffs into the infinite. For now there's **"The Force Awakens" (Dec. 18)**, which does what "Creed" just did to the "Rocky" movies: It leaves the movies in the hands of the next generation. But then we were all once stoked for the prequels, weren't we?

Of course, there will always be dumb remakes, like **"Point Break" (Dec. 25)**, a fairly inessential-sounding redo of Kathryn Bigelow's surfer bank robber classic.

FILMS ABOUT FAMILY MATTERS

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler play sisters in "Sisters." UNIVERSAL

Good news! The two big family films this season are ad-lib-heavy comedies. The first time Amy Poehler and Tina Fey paired for a movie it was the bizarrely wan "Baby Mama." Here's hoping **"Sisters" (Dec. 18)** is more their speed, with the two throwing a bittersweet (but probably silly) soiree.

Meanwhile, the last time unlikely pair Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg teamed up was the brilliantly nutso "The Other Guys." They have a lot to live up to with **"Daddy's Home" (Dec. 25)**, especially considering their second mashup is rated PG and may be too fam-friendly.

FILMS THAT TEACH YOU INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

Steve Carell and Ryan Gosling talk shop in "The Big Short." PARAMOUNT PICTURES

The studios always make room for eat-your-vegetables issue films. There's a bunch of stars in **"The Big Short" (Dec. 11, NY/LA; Dec. 25, everywhere)** which re-creates the migraine-inducingly complex road to the 2008 economic catastrophe, but with such pretty faces as Christian Bale, Ryan Gosling and Brad Pitt (and Steven Carell's not bad-looking either, even with that toupee).

Will Smith, meanwhile, has **"Concussion" (Dec. 25)**. Initially it was presumed this would be a brazen takedown of the NFL, but its makers have since insisted it's only slightly merciless toward America's most profitable sport.

FILMS ABOUT DEATH AND DYING

The holidays wouldn't be the same without grim studies of mortality and the struggle to survive, would they? First up is **"In the Heart of the Sea" (Dec. 11)**, Ron Howard's literally splashy look at the destruction of a whaling ship and its surviving crew. Led by a reliably macho Chris Hemsworth, some make it to the lifeboats, only to have turn to cannibalism. Christmas dinner comes early.

If that isn't Christmas-y enough, there's also **"The Revenant" (Dec. 25, NY/LA)**, in which "Birdman" director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu focuses on a scruffy Leonardo Di Caprio scampering about the wilderness in 1823. Sorry, but claims of a "bear rape" scene were false.

Chris Hemsworth is macho in "In the Heart of the Sea." WARNER BROS. PICTURES

FILMS FROM BIG-TIME FILMMAKERS

Jennifer Lawrence vies for another Oscar in "Joy." TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

Sometimes the director is the big draw. Jennifer Lawrence may be all over the ads for **"Joy" (Dec. 25)**, about a single mom trying to get the Miracle Mop off the ground. But it's perhaps moreso the latest from her "Silver Linings Playbook" and "American Hustle" boss, David O. Russell.

Russell has nothing on Quentin Tarantino, who's such a titan he's been able to make a blockbuster that a) is a Western, b) is three hours long and c) stars the not-so-profitable likes of Kurt Russell, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Bruce Dern. Behold **"The Hateful Eight,"** which opens **Dec. 25** only in theaters with old-timey 70mm projectors, then **Jan. 8** eveywhere else. There will be blood — and talking.

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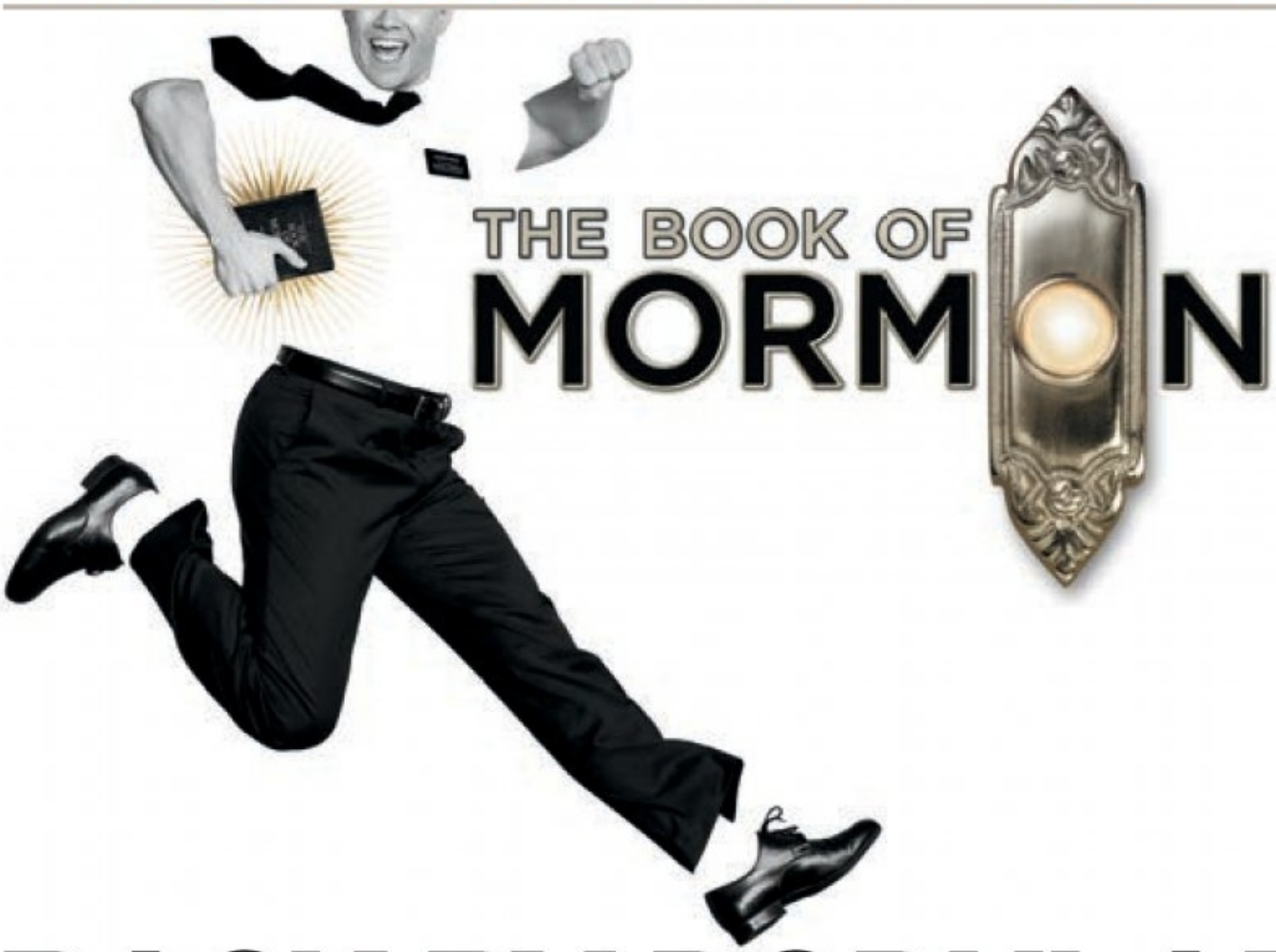

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Spike Lee is back and still great

"Chi-Raq"

Director: Spike Lee
Stars: Teyonah Parris, Nick Cannon
Rating: R

• • • • •

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

Teyonah Parris ("Dear White People") gives a star-making turn in Spike Lee's "Chi-Raq." ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

It's been a decade since we got a real Spike Lee joint — the kind that pisses off the right people, the kind that speaks loudly and bluntly about societal ills that show no sign of abating, the kind that mixes the political with the humane, the kind that actually gets a wide release. "Chi-Raq" is one of those: an angry, boisterous, timely, hilarious, serious, goofy, necessary salvo. Lee has spent the last 10 years struggling to get work out, struggling to get money for films that can address what's going wrong. "Chi-Raq" is just that. It's so up-to-the-minute, especially about black-on-black urban gun violence in Chicago, that it has a solid Ben Carson diss.

It's a satire crossed with a Greek tragedy — an actual one, namely Aristophanes' "Lysistrata." Here, as there, the women of a community engaged in war go on a sex strike, led by Lysistrata (Teyonah Parris), the ladyfriend of a rapper/gang leader (Nick Cannon). She's gotta have it, but she also knows her man might prefer it to reckless gunplay. Soon she's rounding up other women to join her, hoping her "blue balls movement" will cause people to put down arms.

Lee, as commentators never tire of pointing out, is messy, but the jostling between tones — broadly funny, often filthy, then devastatingly serious, then back again — makes sense with this topic. The palpable anger needs the levity of sex jokes, just as the sex jokes are built on a foundation of palpable anger. "Chi-Raq" is fun, and often very funny, and also focused in its fury and its conviction. It keeps moving, building to a utopian conclusion whose far-fetchedness makes its subject all the more despairing. It feels very now and timeless, universal and very, very much Spike Lee.

Allison Tolman, Adam Scott and Toni Collette run afoul of a Christmas creature in "Krampus." STEVE UNWIN

"Krampus"

Director: Michael Dougherty
Stars: Adam Scott, Toni Collette
Rating: PG-13

• • • • •

Tyler Perry gets chastised for mixing together extreme tones. But he has nothing on the Christmas horror/sorta-comedy "Krampus." It opens with a "Bad Santa"-style satire of holiday shopping, then slides into a wan imitation "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation." Soon it turns into a freaky, beautifully filmed and rather grim dark horror. Every now and then, it wants to be a more comedic "Gremlins," but those scenes seem spliced in from another movie (maybe an actual "Gremlins" knockoff).

It could and should have been simple. Its monster is the Krampus of Alpine folklore, essentially the, well, bad Santa: a horned, animalistic creature who punishes the misbehaving kids Kris Kringle snubs. Instead, he's been repurposed as an agent of vengeance, accidentally summoned by a sad boy to take out his mean extended family during the big Christmas hoedown.

But little holds together. The suspense scenes are moody and genuinely eerie. The creatures aren't CGI but lovingly made contraptions, usually boasting gorgeously eerie masks. They're the stuff of nightmares, and they don't jibe with jokes about alcoholic aunts spiking hot chocolate or Red State types making global warming gaffes. Even the Krampus and its powers are poorly explained, even after they've been actually explained in a mid-film animated sequence. It's not clear who it thinks its audience is. The filmmakers seem to think it's everyone, but it's really no one. MP

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Lucy Lawless fights again

The onetime Xena: Warrior Princess reunites with old friends for "Ash vs. Evil Dead."

MATT PRIGGE
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To many, Lucy Lawless is forever Xena: Warrior Princess. But right now she's Ruby, one of the people fighting the undead in "Ash vs. Evil Dead," the new Starz show that continues the story of Bruce Campbell's Ash, the wise-cracking, one-handed hero of the "Evil Dead" films. It reunites her with some old "Xena" buddies too, including Campbell and producers Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert, the latter her real-life husband.

When you're acting with Bruce, you probably don't want to try and be too funny.
It's better you get to be Dean Martin to Jerry Lewis. I would describe my character as an irritant. Ash is on a mission to save the world, and she's going to make it hard for him. She's introduced slowly in the beginning, partly because I was working on something else in the middle of the show. Ash builds this ad hoc family of misfits, and then you bring someone in who's going to f— it all up.

She's kind of the practical one, whereas he's still very immature.
He's a man-child, isn't he? I think it was the right time to make the show. Ash at 45 is nowhere near as funny as him at 50-something. It's hilarious that he has dentures. Ash has dentures! It's funny that this lothario is gumming girls at night. It's funnier at this age than 10 or 15 years ago. He has a girdle.

What are your memories of first acting with Bruce when he would do episodes of "Xena" and "Hercules"?
In those days, he was at the height of his handsomeness. He was such a man — so ridiculously good-looking and so funny. But he had this particular habit of coming to work in these really dorky clothes. He'd wear sandals and long socks. I don't mean tube socks. They were like the 1970s socks that dads used to wear when I was a child. It was so incongruous. Here's this really handsome dude — everybody reveres him. But he thought all he deserved was tall socks and sandals. He was handsome, and here he was, dorking himself up.

Lucy Lawless reunites with old "Xena" and "Hercules" pals Bruce Campbell and Sam Raimi on "Ash vs. Evil Dead," which airs Saturdays on Starz. STARZ

GETTY IMAGES

Remembering Xena

"Xena" portrayed a strong female character at a time when there weren't yet many. Was it hard to sell back then?
I know in France when they were trying to sell it, they were saying, "No, no, no. France will never like a female action hero." "But you're the country of Joan of Arc!" And it was immensely successful in France. In the next year, there was "Buffy" and there was a bit of a renaissance. Because there hadn't been a female action hero since Wonder Woman and Jaime Sommers [the Bionic Woman]. Xena was not like them. She was a more flawed, gritty, gnarly scrapper than either of those characters.

There's been a lot of focus lately on gender equality.
I'm a little bit divorced from this argument about female empowerment, because it's all I've ever known. I'm from New Zealand, where women had the vote before anyone else. I had a strong family, with a strong mother.

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Let's spend the 'Night' together

Adam Pally goes all out in "Night Owls" — and even kisses a few reporters.

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Never let anyone say Adam Pally won't take one for the team. The "Happy Endings" and "The Mindy Project" star is so eager to promote his dark comedy "Night Owls" that he starts our interview with a very forward overture. "I will kiss you. If you want that for a story, I will kiss you. Tell everyone I will kiss them for a good review," he says, before proceeding to do just that. But back to the film: Pally stars alongside Rosa Salazar as a beleaguered assistant and his drunken hook-up spending the night at his boss' house, which meant filming — and living — in just the one location for the whole shoot.

GETTY IMAGES

Filming in one house has to be daunting.
I didn't even think about it because at the time I was so happy to have been given a script to read that was not where I was playing a guy named Booger or something. It was nice. And then the fact that it was a really tight script and it felt logical, and it seemed like a way to do a movie at this size. We're not supposed to tell you how small the budget was, but it was, like, mad small. [Laughs] Like, really small. So when you're doing a movie like that you just kind of have to roll with it and know that you're going to be in one house.

That kind of situation has to be good for bonding.
For Rosa and I, we didn't know each other that great going in, and then you're like living with someone, and you're like, "Oh, I really don't like you." [Laughs] No, but it becomes more than just shooting a movie when you do a 14-hour night shoot and then you wake up and you go downstairs to have a bowl of cereal in your pajamas and your co-star is there. You just get to know each other so quickly and it just becomes really intense, and that showed onscreen.

How did the house spaces break down, "Real World"-wise?
Rosa's room was definitely the Zen space if s— got intense. There would be days when they would give us, like, 14 pages of dialogue. The breakup scene was shot over two days, and we'd had such a lovely time and become really, really good friends, and then you have two days of essentially breaking up and being really mean to each other. And we got all weird with each other and wouldn't talk to each other, and it was very much mimicking the movie in that way. And I think that showed.

You guys beat the crap out of each other in this. How did you negotiate that physical comedy?
We never even talked once about it. Without knowing each other, I knew that I could withstand a beating from her — and I was so wrong. Holy s—.

Adam Pally and Rosa Salazar have a rough night in "Night Owls," now on VOD. ORION PICTURES

Adam Pally's weirdest night

"I was kind of seeing this girl in college and there was a chance this other girl was going to come home with us," Pally recalls. "I was really, really drunk. We got back to my place and things almost started happening, and I was like, 'Hold on a sec, I'm hungry,' which was an odd thing to say. I walked outside and grabbed an old burrito, took a bite and it instantly got me nauseous. I went to the bathroom — which was in my bedroom, so I had to walk by the two girls — and started puking for, like, three hours."

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A036 - Gissendanner, Nadia • E285 - Wilkerson, Jourdan F406 - Gamble, William • F438 - Rines, Wesley

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A140 - Nixon, Shenda • A208 - Brooker, Tehala • A216 - Gripper, Naima • B432 - Parham, Stacey B444 - Hargrove, Shakia • D814 - Green, Gilbert • D820 - Green, Naftale • D834 - Mccain, William E1014 - Ates, Shenetha • E914 - Lawson, Nicholas • E934 - Settles, Tonya • E946 - Morgan, Audrey E949 - Betts, Ikea • E952 - Harvey, Willie • F1119 - Conway, Joy • F1121 - Theomba, Kristen F1209 - Stewart, Walter • F1279 - Fitch, Summer • G1349 - COLLINS, RENEE • H1623 - Brown, Thomas

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C117 - Santos, Joel • D011- Lucas, Ebony • D016 - Gingras, David
D041 - Hamilton, Judith • D158 - Mccall, Norman • D221 - Hujack, Amy
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1572 - Murray, Chris • 2442 - Brodie Iii, Lionel

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A504 - Bove, Jennifer • A606 - Phillips, Katie
B933 - Greene, Jojo Maurice

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1041 - Glover, Frank • 1058 - Howard, Jessica • 1121 - Harrington, Ashley
1204 - White, Craig • 1226 - Yeager, Daryl • 2065 - Walker, Nicole
3136 - Babb, Karen • 3226 - Scott, Ernest • D1026 - Little, Jason

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B035 - Mcelhone, Oliver • B102 - Gaines, Jacqueline • B172 - Dougherty, Timothy • B189 - Weiser, Holly B199 - Peck, Rhonda • C089 - Leech, Jason • C107 - Terra, Kristin • C119 - Jernegan, Wayne C122 - O'keefe, Kathryn • C170 - Delone, Jeff • C247 - Bard, Brendan • C263 - Jones, Constance

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A006 - Jacobs, Elizabeth • A097 - Gill, Catrine • A106 - Jeter, Denise • A112 - Tolliver, Alexis • A139 - Ross, Shanika • A143 - Daniels, Steve • A150 - Howard, Latifah A177 - Smith, Brenda • B275 - Clement, Annette • B282 - [illegible], Christine • B317 - Johnson, Yolanda • B338 - Williams, Marcus • B352 - Glover, Myesha B363 - [illegible], Jackson • B392 - Gray, Geraldine • B419 - Brown, Lamar • B459 - Castro, Latasha • B472 - Sorrells, OC • B479 - Bourgeois, Monique B502 - Smith, Zaykkiyah • B516 - Watson, Shelia • B520 - Anderson, Terri • B545 - Evans, Shakira • B547 - Whitaker, Lorraine • B563 - Wilson, Cathleen C591 - Williams, Aliya • C623 - [illegible], Robin • C694 - Hinds, Randel • C729 - [illegible] • C746 - [illegible], Lionell • C784 - Williams, Keenan C787 - Conwell, Nadine • C856 - Anderson, Ethan • C915 - [illegible] • C930 - Harrison, Kristen • C935 - Graham, Debora • C960 - Davis, Dana

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A sickly Cynthia Nixon shares a rare moment of peace with her son (Christopher Abbott) in "James White." THE FILM ARCADE

'James White'

Director: Josh Mond
Stars: Christopher Abbott, Cynthia Nixon
Rating: R

●●●○○

A troubled young man struggles with his problems and learns to fix himself through the death of a loved one. There's two extreme ways this could go. One is a relentless, all-caps grindfest a la Gaspar Noe, the filmmaker smashing our faces in inventive unpleasantness. The other is a sappy indie with earnest music, painfully oblivious that its worldview is self-centered and noxious. "James White" finds a medium between the two, and a happy one, one that avoids the unsavory bits of both sides and finds something not only moving but formally exciting and insightful.

"James White" begins with the camera inches from the face of its hero ("Girls"' Christopher Abbott), as though it's about to push right inside it. It will stay almost as close as he rampages through his chaotic life: crashing a club, then the shiva for his estranged father, then back out again to start fights at bars and have random, drunken hook-ups. Things will go bad for him, most notably with his doting but tough love mom (Cynthia Nixon), who finds her cancer, once in remission, returning full force. But there's no clean, straight line for James, and filmmaker Josh Mond is as interested in his valleys as his ... well, not peaks, but the moments when he's less agitated, even peaceful.

Abbott is not quite the whole show in "James White." After sticking right on him in its opening stretch, the camera opens itself up to showing other characters. The images doesn't necessarily become "normal," but they find a way of showing spaces while containing James inside them, making us feel trapped in a hectic life without ever feeling like a gimmick. Even the occasional long takes (Mond is not afraid to cut a lot) never feel like shtick, including one that holds as James cradles his mom, rattling off an imaginary, happy future, "25th Hour"-style, that she'll never see. We've watched someone slowly contain his rage and self-destruction and work his way to something better, all right in front of our eyes. MATT PRIGGE

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The hot list

The holiday season is in full swing, but there's more to do than caroling and booing Ebenezer Scrooge. Here are four Philly VIPs top picks for other types of winter cheer this month — plus a few tips on where to ring in the new year. RACHEL VIGODA

PROVIDED

Nicole A. Cashman
President, Cashman & Associates

• One Liberty Observation Deck is a must-see experience: It's Philly's view from the top, literally. A towering 57 floors — and more than 883 feet — above street level, the observation deck provides sweeping views of the skyline but also a one-of-a-kind vantage point to take in the continuing evolution of the city.

• Eat breakfast with Santa at The Union League. We're looking forward to taking [our son] Jett to get his first visit with Santa Claus.

• Shop local at the Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market at Dilworth Park, which is new this year. The market showcases the work of local artists, crafters, confectionaries and designers.

• Ring in the new year with Countdown 2 Noon at The Please Touch Museum. I'm excited to take part in this fun family event with Jett and Nigel. Countdowns will take place at noon and again at 1 p.m. to accommodate all of the little party animals and their families. It's a holiday tradition and the perfect party for children to ring in the New Year.

Patty Jackson
Radio Personality, WDAS 105.3

PROVIDED

• Heading into the weekend, tonight the hot spot will be DJ GaryO's birthday celebration at Harrah's Philadelphia. You know it's always a rockin' hip party when DJ GaryO is involved.

• On Dec. 8, City Councilwoman Marian Tasco will be honored at a retirement ceremony at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. After her long run of dedication to the city of Philadelphia, it's time for us to give back and honor Tasco as she opens the political window for others.

• Bebashi celebrates 30 years of AIDS education and awareness at the Ben Franklin Hotel on Dec. 11. I'm one of the honorees during the ceremony, which features performances by El DeBarge and Howard Hewitt. And I'm truly thankful to be honored for my work in helping Bebashi spread the awareness of AIDS education. With El DeBarge and Howard Hewitt as part of the night, it will make for an even greater celebration!

• The Kimmel Center hosts a Soulful Holiday Celebration to pay tribute to gospel great Pastor Shirley Caesar on Dec. 15 I love this event each year! To witness several church choirs come together for an evening of holiday cheer is truly uplifting. You will not be able to remain seated when you hear the music.

HughE Dillon
Photographer and Blogger, Philly Chit Chat

PROVIDED

• LGBT grant-making agency Delaware Valley Legacy Fund hosts the ninth TOY party on Dec. 5, in Old City at Fire and Ice. Help them put smiles on the faces of local kids: Bring an unwrapped toy to be donated to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and those served by ActionAIDS.

• On Dec. 7, Zarwin Baum joins Philadelphia Eagles linebacker Brandon Graham and his foundation TEAMGRAHAM in hosting a toy drive at Vesper. Make a donation of $10 (or more!) and/or bring an unwrapped toy as the admission price — and get light bites, tasty drinks and maybe even a chance to chat with an Eagle. The event benefits Little Smiles PA.

• 'Tis the season to rock your ugliest sweater and get judged for it at the 5th Annual Cancer is Ugly! Party (Dec. 19) to benefit The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

• On top of holiday parties, I'm also looking forward to a few eateries opening before 2016, including Italian BYO A Mano in Fairmount, from Townsend Wentz, and Tredici Enoteca in Midtown Village, by the guys behind Zavino's. In Rittenhouse Square, look for Revolution Taco opening by the folks that operate Street Food Philly, Taco Mondo, and Say Cheese trucks.

• Back in Midtown Village, I can't wait for Double Knot. Michael Schulson and Kevin Yanaga are opening a coffee shop — behind a bookshelf you'll find a hidden staircase to a sushi bar and Japanese restaurant on a lower level, for children to ring in the New Year.

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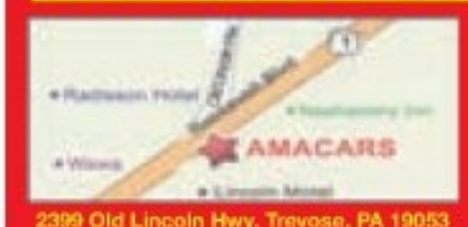

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Keith Jones

Anchor and Reporter, NBC10 News

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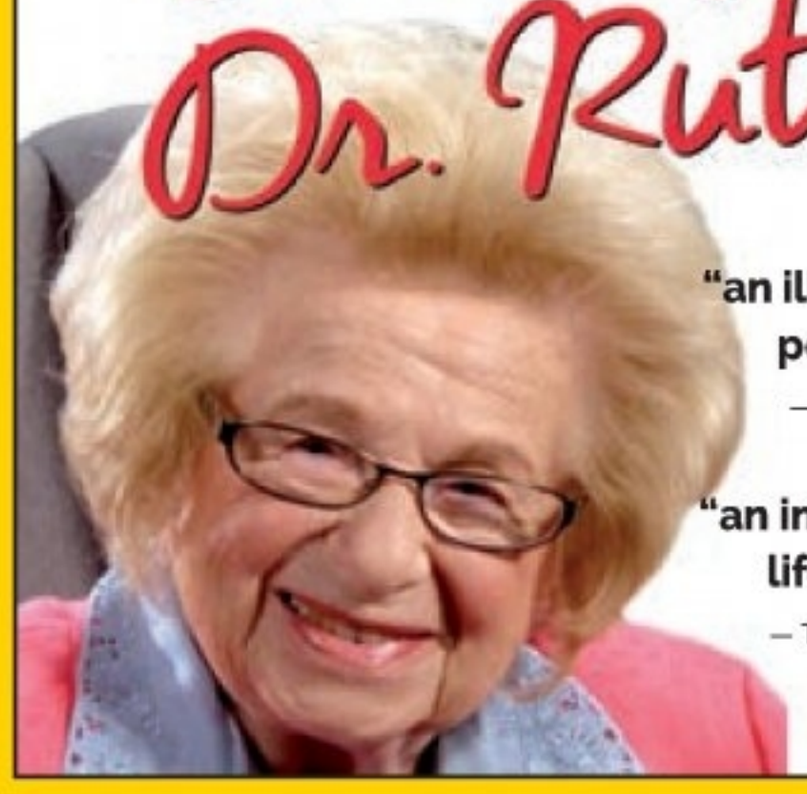
• You can't miss the Comcast Holiday Spectacular. It's an innovative 15-minute holiday show on the world's highest resolution LED display in the lobby of the Comcast Center. Dancers from the Pennsylvania Ballet move to music from "The Nutcracker," a magical sleigh floats over the Philadelphia countryside and actors from the historic Walnut Street Theatre perform.

• I teach at my alma mater, Villanova University, as an adjunct professor of broadcast journalism. Every year, I look forward to producing and recording my students' December newscast, which caps the fall semester! I'm always blown away at my students' growth and potential. Oh, and you have to catch a Villanova men's basketball game. As a former student manager, you could say I'm a bit partial. Go 'Nova!

• If you're looking to volunteer this holiday season, check out local nonprofit Main Line Deputy Dog, which helps people with physical disabilities or mental health concerns train their own dogs to be fully certified service dogs. I'm an animal lover myself — and pamper my 6-month-old mini Australian shepherd, Charlie. MLDD is a frequent outlet for me during the holiday season. I even volunteer on the board of directors.

• For New Years Eve, NBC10 is the TV sponsor of the Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest and Sugarhouse New Year's Eve Fireworks. It's a family affair, and one of the best New Years Eve celebrations in the country! Come out to watch the show in person or watch it on TV.

Becoming Dr. Ruth



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3 Things to watch for as Eagles desperately try to beat Pats

The Eagles could feel the wrath of an angry Tom Brady as the Patriots look to bounce back from last week's loss.

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The Eagles remain a game back in the NFC East behind both the Redskins and Giants heading into an important Week 13 game Sunday at 4:25 p.m. (on Fox).

With the Giants playing the Jets and Redskins slated to play the (nearly out of contention) Cowboys on Monday night, the Eagles badly need to break their three-game losing streak to keep pace:

Tom Brady leads the NFL in yards (3,600), touchdowns (28) and is second in completions in 2015. GETTY IMAGES

1 Contain Brady

Lets face it, Tom Brady could be the greatest ever. Every team in the NFL has its hands full with the seemingly ageless Patriots quarterback, and the Eagles struggling defense will certainly need to be on top of its game Sunday to keep him in check.

"We have to be ready," Eagles defensive coordinator Bill Davis said. "Brady has been in the system for 16, 17 years. They have this thing wired. They've got it wired, where they not only change the play at the line, but in between series, they can change the whole plan. They go from having a two-tight-end, two-back plan, to empty, spread out, every other series. So you are defending by series a plan of attack that's coming at you."

2 Wounded Pats

If there is a good time to face the Patriots, it is this week. The team lost Rob Gronkowski in their Week 12 loss to the Broncos (though he is expected to be back before the season is over). They are also playing, offensively, without Julian Edelman and Danny Amendola. But with Brady behind center, it might not make a difference.

"Did they lose Brady?" Chip Kelly joked to the media Thursday, "because that, I think, would really, truly affect them. And I think it really just speaks to how good of a football player Tom is and the fact that they have had a lot of moving pieces around him. For them, it's that next-man-up mentality, which it really helps when [Brady's] the guy pulling the trigger."

3 Eagles have Bradford back

The Eagles scored pretty early during their two most recent setbacks (to the Buccaneers and Lions). The offense came out potent and looked to be on the cusp of having a big day.

And then, on both occasions, the offense completely sputtered out.

Will the possible return of Sam Bradford help add some consistency to the offense?

"I know Sam is a really good quarterback," Kelly said this week, "and he was playing really well for us before he got injured against Miami. I'm excited to see how he progresses this week so we can get him back out on the field."

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Ugly weather will mess with lineups

A snow bowl, like the one seen in Philly two years ago, is coming this month — mark it down. GETTY IMAGES

As we enter the season's final month, an increasing number of games will be affected by Mother Nature. It can create interesting roster conundrums on Sunday mornings as reports emerge about snow, rain, freezing temperatures and wind. We saw it just last week, as there were cold/wet conditions in Kansas City and snow in Denver. Some things to keep in mind:

Wind over all

The strongest negative correlation when it comes to weather is between wind and passing stats. As wind speed increases, fantasy numbers of quarterbacks and wide receivers decline at a steady rate. The key number is around 20 mph, but I start getting a little concerned if we have sustained winds between 15 and 18 mph. This can especially affect a weaker-armed quarterback like Philip Rivers, Ryan Fitzpatrick or Andy Dalton.

Getting cold in here

Another condition to keep an eye on is temperature. Historical data show that temperatures between 32 and 42 degrees only have a slight negative effect on quarterback production. But temps between 0 and 32 degrees have a far stronger impact on scoring. This makes sense, as truly freezing conditions make it harder to grip the football. Similar to baseball, the ball travels farther in hot and humid situations.

Wet and wild

The general fantasy player overreacts to both rain and snow too drastically. As a general rule, I only let wet conditions affect my decisions if it's really severe. The Lions-Eagles "Snow Bowl" in 2013 comes to mind as an example of severe — Matthew Stafford and Nick Foles combined to complete 21 passes. But no wind and a little bit of rain can actually help a passing game, as defensive backs need longer to react to the cuts of receivers.

ADAM LEVITAN

FANTASY SPORTS

Adam Levitan is a fantasy sports columnist for Metro US. He is also a DraftKings analyst and co-host of The Daily Fantasy Football Edge podcast. @AdamLevitan

Start 'em

David Johnson, RB, Cardinals With Chris Johnson done, it's time for this athletic freak to spread his wings.

Scott Chandler, TE, Patriots Was already expanding his pass-catching role even before the Gronkowski injury.

DeVante Parker, WR, Dolphins Rishard Matthews has fractured ribs and the Dolphins are toast. It's time to unleash Parker.

Brandon LaFell, WR, Patriots No Gronk, no Edelman, no Lewis and a possibly limited Amendola. LaFell's matchup against Philly's Eric Rowe and Byron Maxwell on the outside is pristine.

Another week, another FanDuel millionaire

This week's big winner was Bigneo who utilized the Vikings and Seattle for every point they were worth. Sammy Watkins and Doug Baldwin made for a killer tandem. Both receivers were one percent owned and combined for 65 FanDuel points between them for just a total cost of $12.1 K in salary. Here's the rest of the winning squad:

Wilson

Sunday was a career day for the Seattle QB with five TDs and 345 yards. For the same $7,600 salary in consecutive weeks, Wilson delivered 25-plus points. 3.2% OWNED, 35.2 FANDUEL POINTS (FDPS)

Peterson, Ivory

In a year where the running back position has been absolutely decimated, Adrian Peterson stands alone reminiscent of the Highlander. Not every game has been a gem, but this weekend AP went off for 158 yards and over 30 points in Atlanta.. ADRIAN PETERSON: 13.2% OWNED, 31.7 FDPS CHRIS IVORY: 10.3% OWNED, 17.2 FDPS

Beckham, Watkins, Baldwin

Beckham is the type of player you need to win a tournament of this size. He's explosive and that quality is worthy of such a large portion of your team budget. Some may fear his Week 13 matchup against the Jets and Darrelle Revis, but can the aging corner keep up? ODELL BECKHAM JR: 35.8% OWNED, 24.7 FDPS, SAMMY WATKINS: 1.8% OWNED, 30.8 FDPS, DOUG BALDWIN: 1% OWNED, 35.5 FDPS

Reed

His eight catches for 98 yards against the Giants was a stellar performance for $5.8K. At home this week versus the lowly Dallas Cowboys, he's a nice value in Week 13. JORDAN REED: 17.1% OWNED, 13.8 FDPS

Walsh, Vikings D

BLAIR WALSH: 4.3% OWNED, 8 FDPS, MINNESOTA VIKINGS: 1.1% OWNED, 12 FDPS

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Temple a win away

The Owls, with a win, can also clinch a berth into a New Year's Eve or New Year's Day bowl game.

JON MARKS
@MetroPhilly
sports@metro.us

Temple raised the AAC Division title trophy last week. They can win more hardware Saturday at noon (on ABC). GETTY IMAGES

To say football success has been infrequent on North Broad Street would be a bit of an understatement.

The Owls last conference championship came under the George Makris regime, back in 1967. Since then, through the eras of coaches like Wayne Hardin, Bruce Arians, Jerry Berndt and Bobby Wallace, Temple's highs rarely broke through onto the national stage.

Matt Rhule inherited a 4-7 squad (following some up and down campaigns from Al Golden and Steve Addazio) and promptly went 2-10 his first year. While he insisted back then the team was on the right track, few truly believed him.

"As we look ahead I think the hard lessons we learned were things we had to learn," Rhule said at that time. "Seeing how easy it is to lose a game, how small the margin of error, will be really good for our program moving forward. As I told these guys right from the beginning I'm going to raise the standards, the 'price of admission' here."

Two years later the price of admission has bought Temple a ticket to the title game. Now, with a chance to possibly earn a New Year's Eve or even New Year's Day bowl berth with a win, the Owls need to figure out a way to harness explosive quarterback Greg Ward and the 11-1 Houston Cougars. That won't be easy, considering Houston is averaging a second-best-in-the-nation 42 points per game under first-year coach Tom Herman, with Ward rushing for 17 touchdowns and passing for 16 more (while Demarcus Ayers has a staggering 89 receptions for 1,140 yards and six scores).

"They have really, really good players and coach Herman's a really good coach," said Rhule, who played golf with Herman during the offseason. "They have real talent and Tom's done a great job developing them. Ward's a complete quarterback. He can throw it, run it, zone-read and he can scramble. When you play a quarterback like that, sometimes they have a tendency to make everyone passive and afraid to make a mistake.

"So we're gonna have to be aggressive, but Greg Ward's a winner."

The Cougars' defense, meanwhile, has forced

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from history

28 turnovers, fifth best in the nation. They're also 13th in the nation in rushing defense, allowing 117.5 yards, just a shade below No. 12 Temple's 117.4.

But these Owls have simply come too far to worry about statistics. The only number on their minds is 11. With a victory they'd become the first 11-win team in school history.

Yet in keeping with their season-long "what's next?" mentality that focuses on the immediate rather than the big picture, they're trying their best not to look beyond the opening kickoff.

"You've got to live in the moment," said linebacker Tyler Matakevich, named AAC Defensive Player of the Year following a season in which he's racked up 118 tackles, with four sacks and five interceptions. "But you can't let it get the best of you. It's just another game, except this time after the game you get a trophy."

Rhule, though, who spent six seasons as an assistant for both Golden and Addazio, has a truer appreciation of what's at stake.

"This is a unique, wonderful week in Temple football history," said Rhule, who many forget served as Tom Coughlin's assistant offensive line coach with the 2012 Giants, before he replaced Addazio. "I'm really excited for all the former players who've reached out to me. I'm happy for the campus and for the people in Philadelphia. I'm hoping we can bring back a trophy for them."

After all those lonely years, George Makris could sure use the company.

Years of struggles

The Owls football program has had some good times ... but mostly bad ones:

- In 1967 the Temple Owls went 7-2 under coach George Makris to win the Middle Atlantic Conference title.
- Makris's successor, Wayne Hardin, (the former Navy coach), compiled an 80-52-3 mark over 13 seasons while the school was an independent.
- Between 1984-2009, the Owls had just two winning seasons. One came during Current Arizona Cardinals coach Bruce Arians' second year and the other in 1990 under Jerry Berndt.
- Al Golden (27-34) and Steve Addazio (13-11) made progress and helped usher in the Matt Rhule era.
- Rhule went 2-10 in his first season. On Saturday, he could win 11 games with the Owls for the first time in their history this season.

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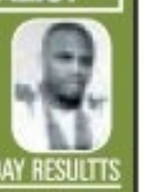

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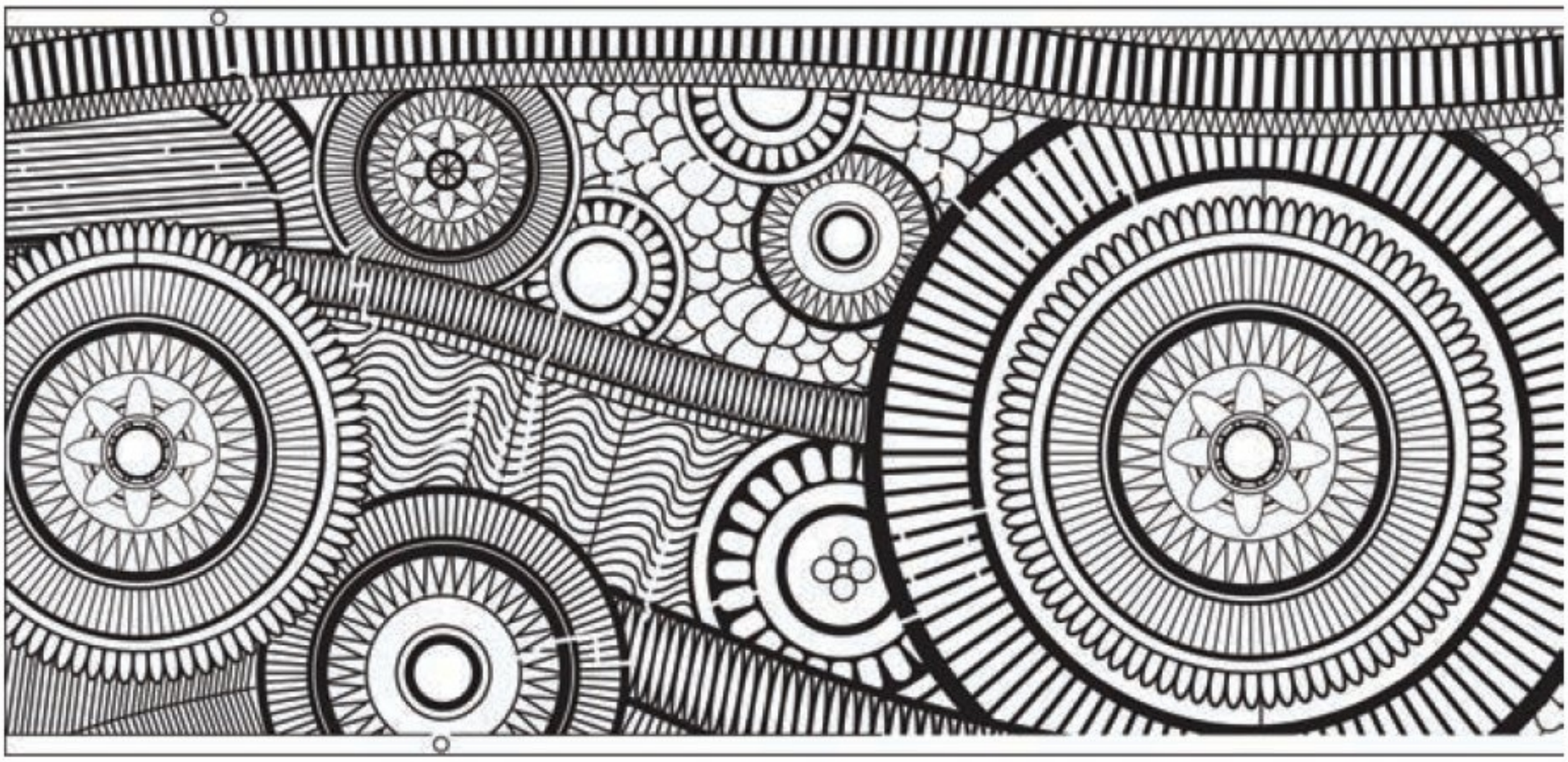


metro.us/crossword

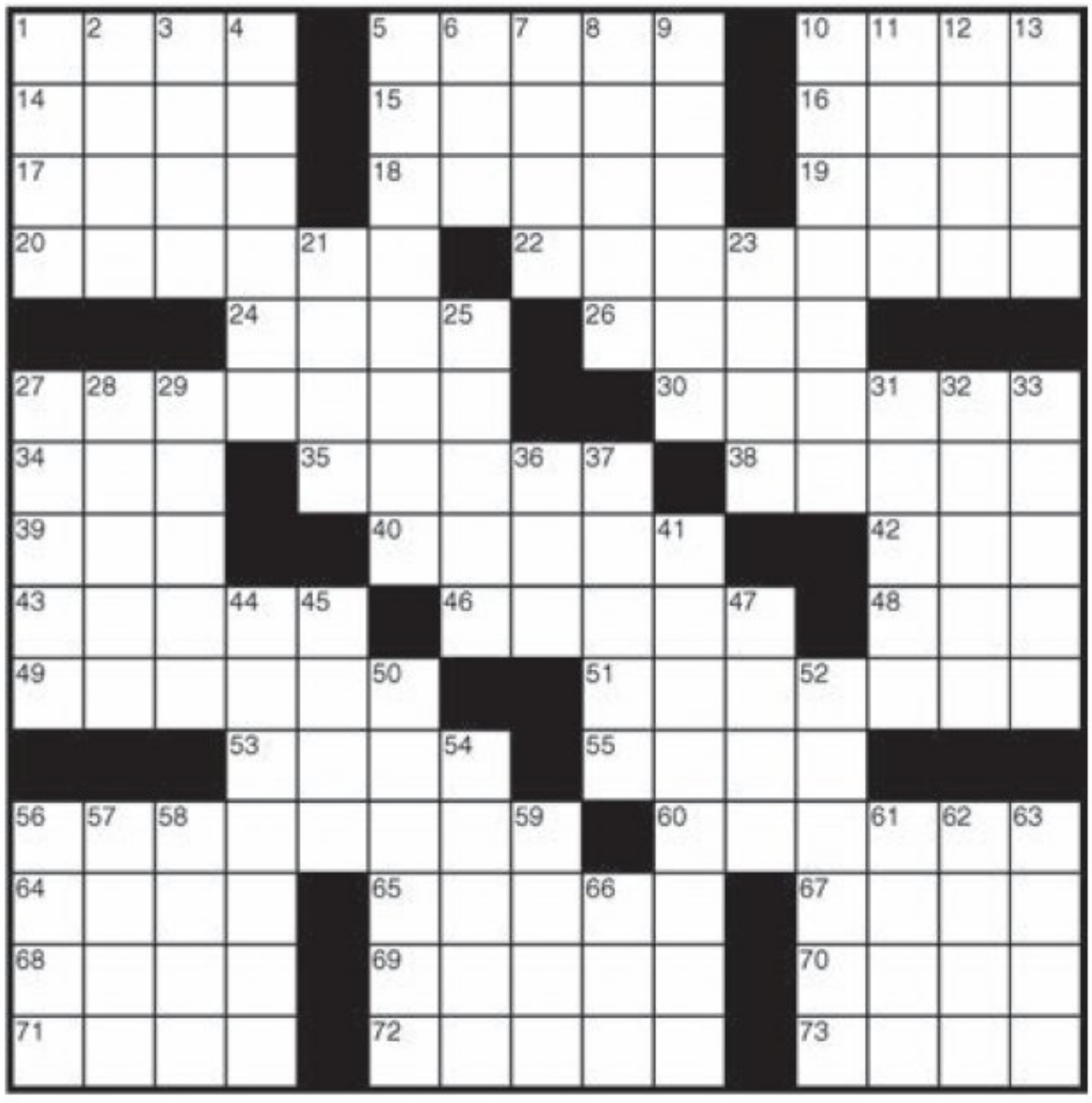
Across

1 Pet lovers' grp.
5 Boat crane
10 Cone producer
14 Kauai neighbor
15 Inner self, to Jung
16 Weaving machine
17 Toga party site
18 Mimic in a cage
19 Bosons live there
20 Mr. Toscanini
22 Courier
24 Soft shoes
26 Ballpark figure
27 Thoroughly
30 Van Gogh painting
34 Puckster Bobby —
35 Vaccine
38 Kind of squash
39 Periodical, for short
40 Yma —
42 TNT part
43 Helen, in Spain
46 Hurricane courses
48 Amateur pro — Mack
49 Turn to bone
51 Numbers on letters (2 wds.)
53 Wannabe prince
55 Fiery gem
56 Topo map lines
60 Czech capital
64 Et — (and others)
65 Kid
67 Starlet's dream
68 Leafy green
69 Snert's master
70 Of an epoch
71 — so much
72 Footfalls
73 Dice throws

Down

1 Lounge
2 Henry VIII's sixth
3 Talk online
4 Cooling-off time
5 Sword of — (constant threat)
6 Whichever
7 Morning glory
8 Mosque officials
9 Gauguin's island
10 Leather substitute
11 Pinch
12 Koh-i- — diamond
13 Tube trophy
21 Towel holders
23 Name in cheesecake
25 Waffle topper
27 Mercutio's pal
28 Face-to-face exams
29 Coaxes
31 — voce
32 Screwed things up
33 Catty
36 Ms. Thurman
37 Passover staple
41 Bough eaters
44 Groovier
45 Frizzy hairdo
47 Bandy words
50 Minors yet
52 Dry red wine
54 — auk or aunt
56 Birthday treat
57 Many a Norway king
58 Shade of green
59 Confucius, for one
61 Hurt with a horn
62 Mongolia's — Bator
63 Lampreys
66 Weaken

FOR THE ANSWERS TO TODAY'S PUZZLES, metro.us/games



games

metro.us/sudoku

easy

4		3					8	
	6				7	2		
	8	9	5			6	1	
	1			2	9			
			4		1			
			8	6			4	
	9	6			5	4	7	
		5	2				6	
	7					1		2

hard

					1			
		7			8	9		
6				7		4	5	1
1				2		7		
9		5	7		6	2		8
		2		9				5
3	8	1		4				7
		9	2			1		
			1					

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Don't let your anger mount. Getting along with others will be far more conducive to success than disagreeing with them and halting progress.

Taurus Sudden changes regarding dubious investments may cause loss and/or damage to your reputation. Get some advice from those you trust.

Gemini Travel, physical activities and entertainment will give you a new lease on life and ease the emotional stress you face.

Cancer Keeping busy is your best course of action against someone looking for a fight. Protect your health and well-being.

Leo Make special plans. Whether you attend an event or host a get-together at home, your generosity will be appreciated.

Virgo Don't overreact to emotional disappointments. Get all the facts and look for a solution that will ensure no one gets hurt or feels alienated.

Libra Shop for something that will lift your spirits and boost your confidence. Take better care of your physical and mental states.

Scorpio Home-improvement projects will be money and effort well-spent. Your unique ideas will help you stand out and be noticed.

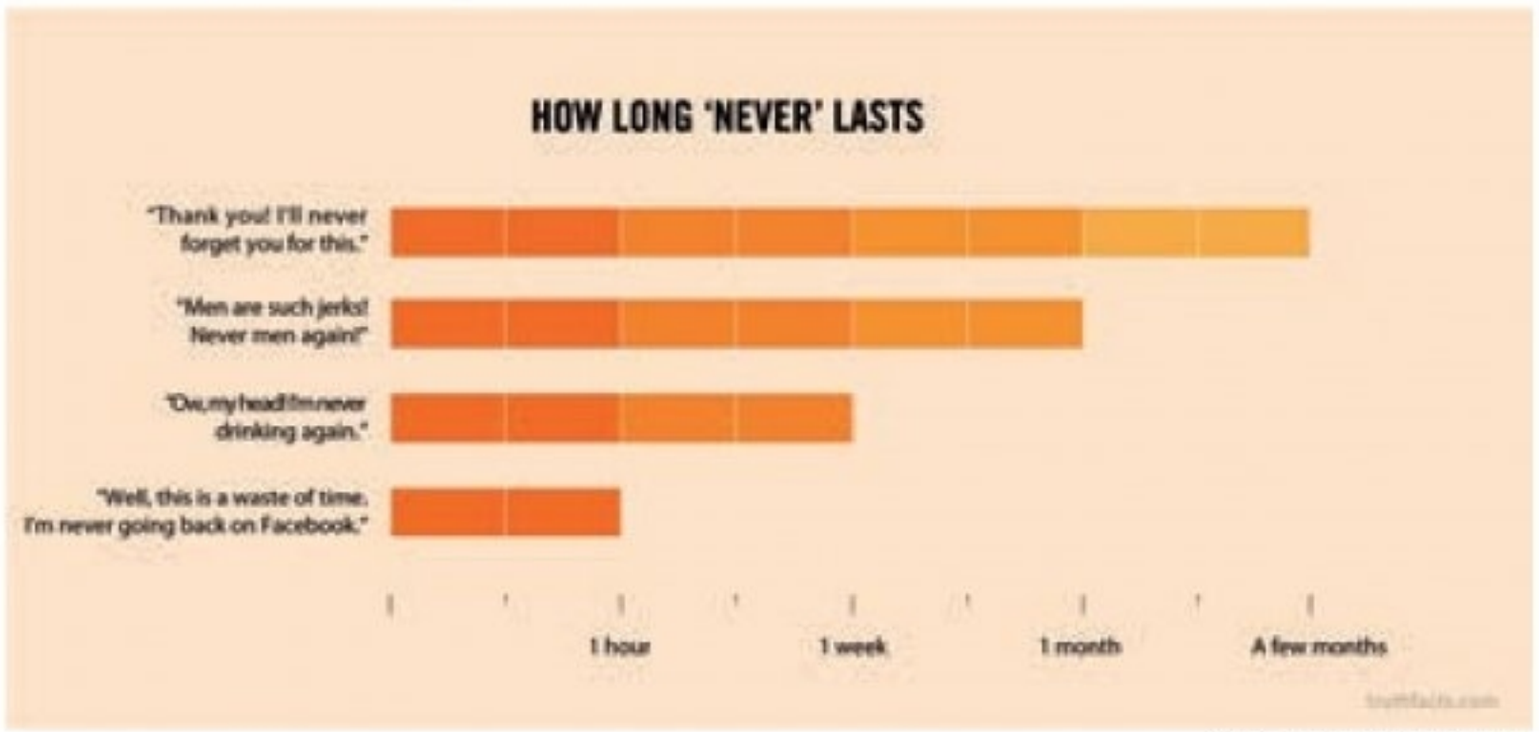
Sagittarius Verify every piece of information that comes your way. Accuracy will make a huge contribution to your success.

Capricorn You can't buy love, but you can go into debt trying. If you want to spend money, purchase something that will grow in value.

Aquarius Voice your opinion and interact with people you feel have something to contribute. Plan a social evening and express your concerns.

Pisces Your emotional life will suffer if you haven't been honest about the way you feel. Someone will take advantage of you. EUGENIA LAST

metro.us/truthfacts


HOW LONG 'NEVER' LASTS
"Thank you! I'll never forget you for this."
"Men are such jerks! Never men again!"
"Ow, my head! I'm never drinking again."
"Well, this is a waste of time. I'm never going back on Facebook."
1 hour
1 week
1 month
A few months

BY WULFF & MORGENTHALER

metro.us/quiz

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